

Confucius institute at Universitas Al Azhar, Jakarta: The unseen power of China

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Abstrak

China's soft power is a difficult concept to measure if the Confucius Institute is the only source relied on. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power puts a strong emphasis on the power of attraction as a tool to persuade or to shape the preferences of others in the worlds of business and politics. To understand how this soft power or the Confucius Institute works, we have to determine the observable power of the intangible attraction embedded in it. This observable but intangible attraction is assumed to be embedded in the language and culture offered by the Institute, namely so called shared values. However, without having attended its classes, it is difficult to see which values are being shared with the local students. Despite this handicap, it is very apparent that the image of China itself has acted as an attraction. An attraction to China was visible already, even before the Confucius Institute was established. For Indonesians, China is a big country which has exerted its power there for a long time through its diaspora and or exports. Therefore, the Confucius Institute is just one of the many forms of Chineseness within their purview. Certainly, the Confucius Institute might have assisted in adjusting negative impressions and expelling some of the reservations the Indonesians have about China. Nevertheless, its influence extends to only a limited number of people who are closely engaged with the Institute.